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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COUNCIL

REPORT RELATIVE TO

VOTER PARTICIPATION
AT STATE AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

ORDER AUTHORIZING STUDY.

(HOUSE, No. 4773 of 1969.)

Ordered, That the Legislative Research Council make a study and investigation relative to methods of increasing voter participation at municipal and state elections, including but not limited to such measures as: (a) providing that all regular municipal elections shall occur on the first Tuesday of November in each odd-numbered year, and that city and town officials elected thereat shall serve for terms of two or four years; (b) that the aforesaid uniform statewide municipal election day in odd-numbered years, and the state biennial election day, shall be legal holidays; and (c) holding municipal and state elections on Saturdays or Sundays, as in other democratic countries. Said council shall file its statistical and factual report hereunder with the clerk of the house of representatives on or before the last Wednesday of January, nineteen hundred and seventy.

Adopted:

By the House of Representatives, April 29, 1969.

By the Senate, in concurrence, April 30, 1969.

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.

GENTLEMEN: — The Legislative Research Council submits herewith a report relative to voter participation. This study is based on House, No. 4773 which was adopted in the 1969 session of the General Court.

Since the Legislative Research Bureau is restricted to basic research and fact-finding, the report contains no recommendations. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the undersigned members of the Council.

Respectfully submitted,

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COUNCIL.

Sen. JOSEPH D. WARD of Worcester,
Chairman.

Rep. JOSEPH B. WALSH of Boston,
Vice Chairman.

Sen. ANDREA F. NUCIFORO of Berkshire.

Sen. JOHN F. PARKER of Bristol.

Sen. ALLAN F. JONES of Cape and Plymouth.

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Rep. SIDNEY Q. CURTISS of Sheffield.

Rep. HARRISON CHADWICK of Winchester.

Rep. J. HILARY ROCKETT of Marblehead.

Rep. WALTER W. O'BRIEN of Raynham.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL TO THE LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COUNCIL.

To the Members of the Legislative Research Council.

GENTLEMEN: — House, No. 4773 of 1969 directed the Legislative Research Council to make a study and investigation relative to methods of increasing voter participation at state and municipal elections.

The Legislative Research Bureau submits herewith a report in accordance with the above order. The scope and content have been limited by the established policy which restricts Bureau research output to factual information, without recommendations.

The preparation of this report was the primary responsibility of Charles L. Shea of the Bureau staff.

Respectfully submitted,

DANIEL M. O'SULLIVAN,
Director, Legislative Research Bureau.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

VOTER PARTICIPATION AT STATE AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

SUMMARY OF REPORT.

Origin and Scope of Study.

In compliance with legislative order, this report examines the extent of voter participation at the local and state level in Massachusetts along with the several other states and certain democratic countries. In addition, the report traces the development of the electoral process in cities and towns in Massachusetts and on a statewide basis in other jurisdictions.

This study was requested by Representative David E. Harrison of Gloucester who is concerned with the effect that state laws and other factors have had on a diminishing interest in elections on the part of the citizenry.

Massachusetts Election Law.

Constitutional Requirements.

The Constitution establishes the basic criteria for voting: a minimum age of 21 years, ability to read and write and a year's residency in the state and six months in the community. Other constitutional provisos relative to voting by paupers, by those under guardianship, by those convicted of crimes and by absentee ballot grant broad power to the Legislature to define the terms used and the voting procedures to be followed.

Moreover the Constitution establishes the election dates and terms of office for state elected officials; changes in these provisions can be achieved only by the amendment process. However, the Legislature does have power by constitutional grant to either establish themselves or delegate to local communities authority to set local election dates.

Statutory Provisions.

Although the basic terms of the constitutional provisions cannot be disturbed by the General Court, it has enacted statutes implementing provisions relative to voter registration, residence requirements for Presidential elections and absentee voting.

Principally the statutes deal with voter registration procedures by defining when and where registration sessions shall be held, prescribing for Saturday and evening sessions prior to elections, the closing dates for registration and the method of registering the infirm and handicapped.

In addition, the enactment of reduced residency requirements for casting ballots for Presidential electors was possible because the Constitution prescribed them only for state and local elections.

Voter Turnout Elements.

Aside from candidates and issues, the principle factors which appear to influence voter turnout are age, sex, educational attainment, economic class, race and party affiliation.

Generally speaking, the younger age groups do not vote as heavily as their older contemporaries. Younger women tend to vote in greater numbers than the elderly, perhaps because those in the over 65 group were not granted the franchise until they were in their late twenties or early thirties.

Educational attainment and economic class closely parallel each other in turnout ratios. Higher educational attainment generally results in higher income.

Although recent legislation has made it easier for negroes to vote, traditionally their voter turnout ratios have been less than whites. This has been particularly true in the South. Finally, partisanship at both the local and state level has proven to be a very strong motivating factor in influencing people to vote.

Federal Provisions.

The federal government has been loathe to interfere with the various states in establishing criteria for registration and voting. However, where gross discrimination has appeared, it has statutorily attempted to protect the rights of

both minority and poorly educated groups. The elimination of the poll tax by Constitutional Amendment has also been a factor in increasing voter turnout.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 has caused greater participation in the South but has had negligible affect in the North. Finally, the recommendations of the President's Commission on Voting and Registration, designed to expand the opportunity for voting, have earned only limited acceptance among the states.

On the national level, interest in Presidential elections is on the wane. Only about 63.8% of eligible voters cast ballots in 1964. Since 1960, 36 states have shown a decline in the percentage of the population voting in national elections. With relation to foreign countries, the United States lags far behind. It is estimated that from 75 to 90% of the electorate vote in Italy, Canada and other nations. Compulsory registration and/or voting, voting on weekends or making national elections days legal holidays account for these high levels elsewhere.

Local Voting Trends.

Of the 351 local governmental units in Massachusetts, 39 function under various city charters and 312 under a town form of government unique to New England. These communities collectively elect about 9,200 town meeting members and better than 10,200 administrative officers.

Towns.

Broadly speaking, town government falls into two general categories. The most popular, found in 270 towns is the open town meeting wherein all the citizens of the town have a voice and a vote in its operation. The remaining 42 towns elect town meeting members who act as the legislative arm of the town government. This structure is of recent vintage and was first adopted by Brookline in 1915. Under each form in most towns there is an abundance of elected officers to carry out the programs approved at the town meeting.

One of the major problems experienced by the towns is sustaining citizen interest in town affairs and elections. Large scale absenteeism makes difficult meeting quorum

requirements, set at as low as six to ten members in some open town meetings. Even with elected town meeting members, quorums have been set at less than fifty per cent of the total membership. Among the reasons given for this apathy is the affluence of modern society, television, commuting time and overall disinterest.

Voting Turnout Ratios.

Alarmed by the ebbing interest in town affairs, many jurisdictions have re-structured their governmental format in an effort to reawaken citizens' concern and participation. The gamut has run from the establishment of a town manager system to increased power for Boards of Selectmen and Public Works. Abolition of many elective offices by granting the above boards broads appointive powers, however, has had no discernible effect on voter turnout.

An examination of recent elections indicates that those held in January, February and March usually attract less interest than those held in late Spring or November. One of the major deterrents to voter participation in Winter and early Spring elections are severe weather conditions. One trend that is evident not only in town elections but in elections at every level is that party competitiveness manifested in partisan contests generally elicits greater voter turnouts.

At the present time both the League of Cities and Towns and the Massachusetts Selectmen's Association are studying proposals to hold town meetings and elections in May. The feasibility of conducting all town elections on a uniform date is also under consideration.

Cities.

Thirty-nine Massachusetts communities are governed under authority of either a special or standard city charter. Standard charter forms were first authorized by the General Court in 1915. However, only eighteen cities have adopted standard charters and even these in some instances have been modified by referendum or statute. The remaining twenty-one cities function under provisions of special charters which closely resemble the standard charters.

Among the cities whose governmental structure is based on a standard form, the least voter participation overall is

found in Plan E cities. The greatest participation is found in those cities with special charters and the two cities that conduct their elections on a partisan basis (Brockton and Northampton).

Voter participation at the local level is exhibiting the same downward trend that is found nationally. However, partisan elections and mayor-council structures of government have shown a less severe decline not only in Massachusetts but throughout the country.

A comparison of voter turnout ratios between Massachusetts cities and towns shows a much greater overall participation in city elections. The reasons given are that city elections are held on a uniform date thus making people more cognizant of the elections. The election of a chief executive in most cities makes the candidates and issues more visible to the public than in town elections. Finally, shorter ballots and less frequent elections in cities apparently have a favorable affect on voter turnout ratios.

States Voting Trends.

Voter Eligibility Provisions.

Age. — The question of lower voting ages has engendered spirited debate since World War II. Three recent Presidents (Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson) have endorsed the proposal and on several occasions both major political parties assembled in National Convention have called for its adoption. However, only four states have lowered the age (Georgia and Kentucky 18, Alaska 19, and Hawaii 20). State legislatures generally have not been receptive to such appeals and the electorate has shown little inclination to revise the age provision in recent years.

Citizenship. — At the present time citizenship is a necessary prerequisite to voting. This unanimity occurred in 1926 when Arkansas denied the vote to non-citizens.

Residence. — The single most restrictive factor in state laws that render the greatest number of potential voters ineligible are residency provisions.

Residency requirements vary from one year in 33 states to a minimum of three months in two states. The remaining fifteen require six months. Although the trend has been

toward liberalizing these requirements, most Southern jurisdictions are holding to the one year proviso.

Of the 33 states with a one year basic requirement, 17 have lowered their qualifications for Presidential elections ranging from three months in Delaware to no minimum in three other states. Among the balance of the states five have no minimum requirements.

Literacy Tests. — As late as 1965, 19 states required a literacy test of one form or another. So long as the test was valid and was not used discriminatorily the federal government did not interfere. However, in 1965 tests conducted in some six states were attacked in the federal courts. As a result federal registrars were dispatched to those areas to register voters.

Terms and Dates of Elections. — This report has utilized voter turnout ratios in gubernatorial elections from 1962 to 1968 inclusive for purposes of comparison. All but five states elect their Governor in November of the even numbered years. One state, Louisiana, conducts its election in February of the even numbered year and the remaining four provide for November elections in the odd-numbered years. Eleven states have established two year terms while in the remaining 39 they are four years. Twenty-four of these 39 states conduct elections at the midpoint of the Presidential term while ten hold them concurrently with the election of Presidential electors.

The most recent changes in terms of Governor occurred in Massachusetts, Michigan and Nebraska which elected their first four year term Governor in 1966.

Voter Turnout Ratios.

The same factors that affect local elections appear also as determinants in state elections, among them party competitiveness, residence and literacy, along with polling hours, machine use and precinct size.

Just as partisan elections generated greater interest at the local level, party competitiveness has a similar influence among the states. In 126 gubernatorial elections surveyed, the voter turnout was the heaviest in those states where both

major parties were strong. Moreover, in former one-party states, the degree of participation escalated rapidly when the opposition party gained in strength.

Residence requirements have had no major effect on voter turnout. On the basis of the elections examined, states at both ends of the residence spectrum had sizeable turnouts. Overall, a slight edge might be given those states with briefer requirements but the effect is almost negligible.

Polling hours, however, appear to have an effect. Generally, those states whose polls were open until 8:00 P.M. or later showed greater participation than those whose polls closed earlier.

Literacy tests themselves do not appear to be a serious impediment to voter turnout in those states where no discriminatory practices exist. However, in some jurisdictions, this device had an adverse affect especially in certain Southern states.

Machine voting and precinct size can make it easier for a person once he gets to the polls to vote. However, neither seems to be a factor in inducing an individual to go to the polls.

Massachusetts Statewide Participation.

In comparison with other states, Massachusetts shows a rather high voter participation ratio, and this in spite of a literacy test and a one year residency requirement. In the 1962, 1964 and 1966 gubernatorial elections Massachusetts ranked third, ninth and fourth respectively in percent of voting age population casting ballots. In the 1968 Presidential election the Commonwealth ranked 12th.

As elsewhere, the greatest voter interest appears in Presidential election years. And similar to most other states, a steady decline in voter turnout ratios has occurred. Considerable concern has also been expressed by students of government over the large number of people who fail to "go down the ballot" once they are in the polling booth. As many as 620,000 plus blanks have been cast on constitutional referenda in recent elections.

However, the Commonwealth has adopted several major election reforms recently. As indicated, the Governor en-

joys a four year term, and the joint election of Governor and Lt. Governor becomes effective in the November 1970 balloting. The voters in 1970 will decide on a reduction of the residency requirement from one year to six months and a reduction in the voting age to 19. If the former is approved, it is estimated about 100,000 additional people will be eligible to vote. And proposals to facilitate registration and absentee voting are under consideration by the General Court.

In 1968 almost 1,000,000 potential voters did not participate in the national election in Massachusetts. Aside from about 10% who are institutionalized and mentally incompetent, opponents of certain registration requirements and even registration itself contend that the literacy test victimizes many foreign born who are good citizens but have trouble with the English language. Moreover, they claim that automatic registration or home enrollment at least would increase voter turnout as it has in foreign countries. On the other hand, proponents insist that elimination of the above could only lead to fraud.

Low voter turnout at primaries is attributed to the absence of absentee voting and the reluctance of many people to affiliate with a party. Although proposals designed to keep party enrollment secret under certain conditions are regularly filed, the fear of fraud or the crossing of party lines dooms them to defeat.

Election Dates.

Although some states designate general election days as holidays, in practice they are not generally observed. Proponents of holiday voting contend that people could vote at their convenience, thereby swelling the turnout at the polls. Several national publications have endorsed the proposition, as has the President's Commission on Voting and Registration.

Several proposals calling for 24 hour polling have been espoused and several measures are pending in Congress on this score.

Uniform election dates for state and local elections are in effect in some states. Proponents argue that more attention is focused on the election thereby generating greater in-

terest. Opponents claim, especially in local elections, that local officials can best decide when to vote and that the candidates and issues, not the date, spur voter turnout.

Finally, weekend voting and time off for voting have been proposed. Certain religious sects oppose either Saturday or Sunday voting thereby creating problems. Although many states do grant time off to vote, it has shown no apparent effect on voter turnout. In Massachusetts few take advantage of it because of loss of pay involved.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

VOTER PARTICIPATION AT STATE AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

Chapter I. Introduction.

Origin and Scope of Study.

This report is required by a legislative order, House, No. 4773 of 1969, printed on the inside of the cover page of this document, which was adopted by the House of Representatives on April 29, 1969 and by the Senate, in concurrence, on April 30, 1969.

Representative David E. Harrison of Gloucester, the sponsor of this study order, feels that, despite relaxed residency requirements, the federal voting rights act, liberal absentee voting provisions and more intensified and localized registration procedures, factors other than disinterest are keeping voters away from the polling booths, especially in state and local elections. He is of the opinion that serious consideration should be given to automatic registration through use of the annual police listings now found in some foreign countries. Further, the lowest possible residency requirements should be adopted for all elections along with more liberal absentee voter requirements. In accordance with the order, a study of election laws and participation has been made, not only of our sister states but also of certain democratic countries.

Related Massachusetts Election Laws.

Constitutional Requirements. — The Massachusetts Constitution prescribes certain basic rights relative to voting and gives the Legislature power to supplement these provisions.

The basic criteria for voting eligibility — 21 years of age, the ability to read the Massachusetts Constitution and write one's name in English, — is established by Articles III and XX of the Amendments to the Constitution. Paupers and persons under guardianship are disqualified as well as those convicted of corrupt election practices. These same amendments prescribe residency require-

ments of one year in the Commonwealth and six months in the town or district. They also preserve an elector's right to vote in his former community for a period of six months after removal therefrom.

Absentee voting in general elections only (not primaries or preliminaries) is authorized by Article of Amendments XLV. This procedure is available to an individual who is absent from the municipality on election day or who is prevented from voting in person by physical disability.

Other Articles of Amendment regulate the conduct of elections such as Article LX which permits the Legislature to prescribe compulsory voting but prohibits it from precluding secret ballots. The Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even numbered years is designated as state election day by Section 3 of Article LXIV. Among other provisions, Article XXIX gives the General Court power to provide for more than one polling place in a town and Article XXXVIII allows the use of mechanical devices for voting. And the most recently approved article, the Home Rule Amendment, although there is some uncertainty on this point, appears to grant to the General Court the power to establish certain criteria in municipal elections such as date setting and the like.

Amended Article LXIV of the Constitution establishes terms for the office of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary, Treasurer and Receiver-General, Auditor, Councillors, Senators and Representatives. Since 1966, except for the last three, the terms have been for four years. The terms for the last three are two years. Eligibility criteria to participate in the election of any of the above are identical. No provision is contained in this amendment granting the Legislature any power to alter the terms or the dates on which they shall commence and expire. This is dissimilar to Article XIX which grants the Legislature power to set by General Law the elections of Sheriffs, Registers of Probate, Clerks of Court and District Attorneys.

Statutory Requirements. — While the General Court may not disturb the basic terms of the constitutional provisions on age and residency requirements (other than through the authorized methods of amendment and revision), it has, in several areas, enacted statutes which serve to either execute or implement those provisions, such as voter registration, residence requirements for Presidential elections and the criteria for absentee voting. Also, the Legislature has more clearly defined the terms used in the Constitution. Thus, public

assistance recipients have been excluded from the definition of paupers and their franchise has thereby been preserved (G. L. c. 50, § 1). This section is almost identical with Amendment Article III but with terms more clearly defined.

Because the Constitution does not prescribe residency requirements for Presidential and Vice Presidential electors, the Legislature has authorized new residents with 31 days state residency to vote in such elections (G. L. c. 51, § 1A). This section also permits those who live on federal reservations and are not members of the military to vote in these elections.

Eight other statutes prescribe the voter registration process. For city and town elections registration is permitted to within 31 days of a primary and to within 20 days before the election. Mobile registration units are also permitted under this proviso (G. L. c. 51 § 26). In conjunction with this, cities are required to hold registration session within 60 days of the election and the last day of registration (a) at least once in each ward, (b) at least one night in each week for three weeks prior to the close of registration and (c) on at least one Saturday within two weeks of the close of registration (G. L. c. 51, § 29B). Similar provisions hold true for towns (G. L. c. 51, § 30). The only exception to the closing date for registration applies in the case of military personnel who may register up to the day before an election (G. L. c. 31, § 50).

Two other sections provide for registration of physically disabled persons in their homes for those elections in which absentee voting is permitted and another proviso permits registration in factories, mills, hospitals, rest and nursing homes if ten voters request the same and certify that at least ten or more persons desire to register at one of the above locations (G. L. chapter 51, §§ 22A and 42B). The method of determining a person's ability to read and write is prescribed in chapter 51, section 44.

In adopting these statutes the Legislature attempted to make clear the requirements for voting and to make as easy as possible full voter participation.

Voter Turnout.

Participation in elections not only in Massachusetts but throughout the country follows a distinct pattern from which certain conclusions can be drawn. The principal factors which influence voter turnout are age, sex, educational attainment, economic class, race and party affiliation.

Age. — The age group of 30 years or under generally has the lowest voter participation rating. Although the average age of the nation's population is approaching 27, the average voter is close to 45 years old. In the 1964 Presidential election, only 44% of the eligible population 21–24 years old voted, whereas 69% of those 45–64 years old voted. Even those 75 years of age or older had a participation rate of 51%. Although statistical studies are at best spotty, a survey in 1924 in Cook County, Illinois indicates that general indifference to voting was more common among the young than the old.¹ The per cent of those not voting closely parallels the index for 1964. As indicated in the Council's report on Lower Voting Ages, the proponents of lower voting ages argued that the lack of participation on the part of those 21–30 years of age was because it took several years to acquire the habit of voting. Another study indicates the same trend, that the middle-aged person is more likely to vote than any other age group.²

Several reasons are offered for these developments. The President's Commission on Voting and Registration felt their low participation resulted from the fact that young people were the group least involved in politics and this coupled with the fact they move most frequently placed additional obstacles in their path.³ The middle-aged person who has experienced depressions and wars seems to have a keener interest in politics. As the breadwinner of the family aware of unemployment, taxes and responsibility, he votes to protect or further his position in life and has thereby become accustomed to voting. The aged American (over 65) can be emotionally moved by retirement and social security appeals to go to the polls. Physical infirmity rather than disinterest accounts for the decline in voting by senior citizens.

Sex. — It was not until 1920 that women were granted universal suffrage. Prior to that time males only voted and the women's place was considered to be in the home. And many women did not take advantage of the franchise. In a report published in 1924 which surveyed non-voting in Cook County, Illinois⁴ one of the principal reasons given for women's low voting ratio was their disbelief in women's voting. The women of that era are the women

¹ Merriam and Gosnell, *Non-Voting*, University of Chicago Press, 1924.

² Murray B. Levin, *The Alienated Voter*, Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1966.

³ Registration and Voting Participation, Report of the President's Commission, November, 1963.

⁴ Merriam and Gosnell, *Non-Voting*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill., 1924.

now in the over 65 age category today. These women did not develop the habit of voting probably because of their strong feelings that men alone should participate in government. This same feeling is reflected in the following table which shows that 11% fewer eligible women voters than eligible men in the 65 to 74 age group participated in the 1964 Presidential election. An even greater differential occurred in the 75 and over age group as 17% fewer eligible women than men voted.

However, this differential is not so evident in the younger age groups where the spread in some instances is only 1%. Television, education and the like have made women, especially the younger ones, more politically orientated and voting conscious. In 1964, 65% of male eligibles voted as against a 60% ratio for female voters. Although approximately 53% of the adult population is female, the per cent of women participating in elections is just now approaching that of men. And projections indicate that as years go by and today's younger women move into the older age groups, they will become a more potent force in elections.

TABLE 1. — *Voter Participation by Sex — 1964.*

AGE GROUP.	<i>Per Cent of Men Voting.</i>	<i>Per Cent of Women Voting.</i>
21-24	45	44
25-34	58	57
35-44	67	65
45-54	71	67
55-64	72	66
65-74	70	59
75 and over	59	42

Source: J. W. Friedhelm, Where Are the Voters, The National Press, 1968.

Educational Attainment. — Statistical studies show that citizens with a high educational level vote more frequently than their contemporaries whose educational level is lower. For example, 47% of Massachusetts' population 25 or over had completed at least four years of high school and 8.8% had completed at least four years of college.¹ In Mississippi only 29.8% had completed four years of

¹ U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, *Digest of Educational Statistics*, 1966.

high school and 5.6% four years of college. In 1964 76.1% of the Massachusetts electorate voted in contrast to 25.5% in Mississippi. Nationally, 41.1% of the population have completed four years of high school or more and 7.7% have completed four years or more of college. Voter participation in 1964 nationally was 63.5%. The per cent of participation in any given state is closely related to the overall educational level attained by its citizenry. Those states where the greatest percentage of population have merely a grammar school education or less are traditionally the states with the lowest voter participation. Some observers have commented that not only has the Voting Rights Act caused an upward trend in voter turnout in the South but an equally important factor has been the higher educational attainment of its people. Speaking nationally and using 1964 as a base year (any year would actually do) 80.5% of persons over 21 with at least some college training voted compared to 51% of those with less than an eighth grade education. Among college graduates 81% of eligible females and 80% of eligible males voted. Conversely in the elementary education classification women participated at a rate 10% less than men.¹ This same general relationship between education and voting participation exists among both the white and non-white segments. The following table based on the 1964 election supports the validity of these conclusions.

TABLE 2. — *Voter Participation, Educational Level, 1964.*

GROUP.	Elementary School Graduate.	High School Graduate.	College Graduate.
Total Voting Population . . .	60.0	69.1	80.5
Men	65.0	71.3	80.0
Women	55.2	68.2	81.2
Non-White	55.8	63.8	74.9

Source: J. W. Friedhelm, Where Are the Voters, The National Press, 1968.

Economic Class. — Individual prosperity seems to be another factor that bears a direct relationship to voter participation; the higher the median income the higher the per cent of participation. Undoubtedly, educational attainment has an effect on this score because generally speaking the better the education the better the income.

¹ J. W. Friedhelm, *Where Are the Voters*, The National Press, 1968.

In Massachusetts, the 1967 median per capita income was \$3,541 annually, some \$382. higher than the U. S. average. Only one state exceeded Massachusetts in voter turnout in the 1968 Presidential election, Connecticut, with a per capita income of \$3,969. Eight other states had higher per capita income rankings and with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii their turnout approached that of Massachusetts.

Organized labor's "get out the vote" campaigns help increase participation. Those states with extensive union membership also rank among the top states in voter participation.

Race. — Traditionally, negroes have voted less often than whites. Oppressive laws in the South and lack of education and economic prosperity elsewhere account for this group's low participation level. Recently, however, the passage of the Civil Rights Voting Act and an awareness by party leaders of the potential force of negro voters has caused increased participation especially among the middle-class better educated negro. As the negroes' status is upgraded their voter participation ratio will undoubtedly increase.

Partisanship. — It is generally conceded that people identified with a political party vote more frequently. In fact, the President's Commission on Voting and Registration concluded that the most important psychological factor affecting an individual's decision to vote is his identification with a political party. And when an election is expected to be close a strong partisan is even more inclined to vote.

Chapter II. National Voting Patterns.

Federal Provisions.

The federal government has been generally loathe to interfere with the state jurisdictions relative to voting procedures and elections. The United States Constitution originally provided for the appointment of Presidential electors and Senators and for the election of Congressmen. Electors qualified to vote for members of the most numerous branch of the several state legislatures were designated as qualified electors of Congressmen. The adoption in May 1913 of the Seventeenth Amendment called for the election of Senators in the several states, the qualifications of their electors being the same as for Congressmen. Although the federal constitution does not prescribe that Presidential electors be directly elected, both common usage and state law have evolved so that these electors

are chosen by the electorate. And in the election of these federal officials, the federal government has permitted the several states to establish their own prerequisites for voting.

However, where gross discrimination appeared rampant the national government laid down guidelines both constitutionally and statutorily. The Fifteenth Amendment to the constitution was intended to eliminate race, color or previous conditions of servitude as a prerequisite to voter participation. Women were put on equal footing with men through ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. And the Twenty-fourth Amendment eliminated the payment of a poll tax as a condition of voting for Presidential and Vice-Presidential electors, U. S. Senators and Congressmen.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 eliminated several tests and devices which were designed to keep people from voting. Basically, it was aimed at those states, chiefly in the South, with less than 50% voter participation. It provided for federal examiners to certify people as eligible to vote in those states and districts which appeared to be acting discriminatorily in either registering people to vote or allowing people to vote.

Because this legislation expires August 6, 1970, several proposals for its extension or amendment are being considered by Congress. One measure, which has the approval of the President, passed the House of Representatives on December 11, 1969 by a vote of 208 to 203. It is presently being considered by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. It differs from the present law which proponents claim added 800,000 to 1,000,000 new negro voters in seven states since 1965 in four areas. The mathematical formula for determining discriminatory election procedures is changed so that federal examiners would be permitted to go to any state they felt was illegally abridging the right of any citizen to vote. The literacy test would be suspended in all states until July 1974 and not just in those states charged with discriminatory practices. The new measure also authorizes court action on the part of the national government to block alleged discriminatory voting law changes. The present law requires the federal Attorney General's approval of all voting law changes in those states charged with discrimination in voting procedures. Lastly, the new proposal calls for a uniform residency requirement for Presidential electors by allowing a person who resided in the voting district on or before September first of the election year to vote for Presidential electors.

Effect of Federal Action.

Today slightly over 60% of the voting age population casts ballots in Presidential elections. This has not always been so. Two major extensions of suffrage were accomplished by constitutional amendment (negroes and women suffrage). While there is no evidence of sex discrimination in elections, until recent years effective impediments thwarted the free exercise of the franchise by the negro, notwithstanding the protection of the Fourteenth Amendment. Two factors seem to influence extensions of suffrage: (1) a widely shared belief that certain segments of the populace are being deprived of that right, and (2) the expectation by political leaders that the newly enfranchised would support them.

In 1860 only 38% of the country's adult population was eligible to vote. By 1880 that ratio had risen to 48% and by 1920 to 85%. Since 1950 over 95% have been eligible. But as indicated voter participation levels fall far below eligibility levels. Two factors account for this result: (1) interest in elections, and (2) state laws. The difference in interest level seems related to (1) differences in coverage given the election by the various news media; (2) the importance attached to the office by the voters; (3) the issue raised in the campaign; and (4) the candidates themselves.

State laws and practices have had a direct bearing on voter turnout. Residency requirements overall is one of the biggest deterrents. In the South, negroes and low income whites were disenfranchised by the poll tax (now eliminated), extreme literacy tests, discriminatory administrative procedures and white primaries which gave the negro only anti-negro candidates to vote for or against. On a limited basis, the Northern states used the above to restrict the electoral participation of immigrants.

As cited earlier, the per cent of population eligible to vote has constantly increased. Conversely, the per cent of those eligible exercising the franchise has declined. Nationally, over 80% of those eligible participated in 1860 whereas only about 60% of those eligible participated in 1964. In 1924 and 1948 it was below 50%. The principal contributing factors seem to be the restrictions placed on negro voting in eleven Southern states which caused a decline in those states from almost 75% in 1876 to a low of less than 30% of those eligible by federal standards in 1948, and a decline from over 85% in 1860 to about 65% in 1964 in the Northern states. Competent observers attribute the Northern loss to a lessening of party interest, the decline of stable party voting and an increase in

people aged 21-30 who through the years have participated less than the middle aged and older people in elections.

The agitation for civil rights in the late 1950's and early 1960's and the subsequent passage of legislation undoubtedly prevented a much lower national average. Thus, since 1960, 36 states have shown a decline in the per cent of population voting. Except for Alaska and Hawaii, two new states, the remaining 12 all were affected by the civil rights act and all showed greater participation in 1968 than in 1960 (Ala., Ark., Fla., Ga., La., Md., Miss., N. C., S. C., Tenn., Tex. and Va.).

Proposed Residency Requirement Changes.

At present, the various states are empowered to establish residency requirements as a prerequisite for voting. These vary from state to state. Senate, No. 2165, introduced by Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts and Senator Howard Cannon of Nevada would remove this power from the states insofar as Presidential electors are concerned and vest it in the federal government. This proposal calls for a 30 day maximum residency period for Presidential elections. The Bureau of the Census estimates that in 1968 at least 1,645,000 more people would have been eligible to vote had this law been in effect. This proposal is presently being considered by the Senate Judiciary Committee, along with the residency provision contained in the measure recently passed by the House which establishes residence on or before September first of the election year as sufficient.

President's Commission on Voting and Registration.

In November of 1963 a special commission established by the late President John F. Kennedy issued a report and recommended more than 20 changes in state election laws. This study group proposed that all states set certain standards so that all Americans will be treated equally. Among their more important recommendations are door to door registration, and maximum state and local residency requirements of six months and 30 days or less, respectively. They also stressed that voting lists should be used only for electoral purposes, new residents should be able to vote for President, failure to vote should not cancel registration and registration should be permitted as close to election day as is humanly possible. Other recommendations included: (a) absentee voting in both primary and

general elections, (b) elimination of literacy tests, (c) keeping polls open until 9 P.M., (d) smaller precincts, (e) protection against fraud, and (f) reduction of the voting age to 18. Many states have implemented some of these recommendations, none have implemented all. Their impact on Massachusetts election law and voting participation is discussed later in this report.

Foreign Voting Patterns.

It is difficult to compare voter participation in foreign countries with the United States as different statistical methods are used to compute per cent of voter turnout. However, basing voter turnout on a per cent of reported voting age population, the United States lags far behind other countries as the following table indicates. The figures are based on their most recent elections, almost all of which were held in 1968 or 1969.

TABLE 3. — *Voter Participation in National Elections.*

COUNTRY.	Per Cent of Total Population.
East Germany	71.4
England	59.3
Norway	56.2
Yugoslavia	53.2
Finland	50.7
Australia	48.6
France	45.2
New Zealand	44.5
South Korea	37.9
UNITED STATES	36.2

Source: Bureau Questionnaire, World Almanac (1969) and President's Commission on Voting and Registration.

Incomplete data precludes any comparison of the United States and the above nations relative to the participatory rates of registered voters. However the President's Commission reported that in Denmark 85.5% of those eligible voted in 1960, in Italy over 92%, in West Germany from 78 to 87%, and in Canada approximately 80%. In the same year the United States turnout was 63.8%. Several factors apparently cause this higher turnout among foreign countries. In Italy for example, municipal officials compile lists of electors which result in the automatic registration of nearly all

eligible voters. West Germany also uses this registration system and no literacy test or property requirement is imposed in either country. A similar system is in effect in Scandinavian countries. Finally, Canadian registration law requires that enumerators visit each dwelling in the country and register every possible voter.

Australia has a compulsory registration system and a fine of \$4 to \$10 is levied for failure to do so. Once a year electoral agents canvass the country and an electoral claim card is left at each dwelling where names do not appear on the roll.

Thus it would appear that the United States is the only one of the free countries that requires its citizens to take the initiative in order to register to vote. Elsewhere, the government performs the function.

In response to a Bureau questionnaire, officials in Belgium, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland, and West Germany stated their elections are usually held on Sundays or legal holidays. Belgium and Venezuela reported participation of 90%, Mexico of 75%, and Switzerland of 30 to 60% voting age population.

Chapter III. Massachusetts Local Voting Trends.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

A compilation of regularly elected officials of state and local governments was made in 1967 by the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. This report found that Massachusetts had 303 state, 112 county, 766 municipal, 289 school district, 890 special district, and 9,478 town elected officers and officials for a total of 11,838. This figures does not include, however, some 9,140 elected town meeting members who serve as the legislative arm in 42 communities. In elected officials per governmental unit, Massachusetts exceeded the national average in every category but counties. In all probability, the fact that local government had its beginnings in New England and the early settlers reluctance to vest authority in either a single individual or a limited group of individuals because of political oppressions in their native lands resulted in all the freemen of the town or settlement participating in its government. As the nation grew, other sections of the country adopted simpler forms of government while New England clung to its traditional feeling of all citizens participating. Moreover, the structure of government in Massachusetts has not shown any appreciable change in its basic format since 1780 —

especially in towns. The development of city charter forms of government are discussed later in this chapter. However, it was not until 1822 that any city charters were authorized. Thus, open town meeting forms of government or a special city charter form from that time until 1915 were the only types available to the local communities.

In the early part of this century some towns became too large for the traditional town meeting but were reluctant to become cities. The principal deterring factor to adoption of city charters according to students of government was that the Legislature traditionally placed greater restrictions on cities than on towns. Thus, a limited or representative town meeting form of government evolved, being first adopted by Brookline in 1915. Originally, this system was restricted to towns with a population of 12,000 or more. However, the Seventieth Amendment to the constitution reduced the population restriction to 6,000.

TOWN GOVERNMENT.

Except for a few scattered towns in the Midwest and West, town government is a phenomenon unique to New England. In Massachusetts it has taken two general forms. Under both systems, however, there are numerous elected officials.

Town Officials.

The General Laws of the Commonwealth regulate the election of town officers.¹ Generally, a town clerk, town treasurer, collector of taxes, three to five selectmen, assessors, auditors, highway surveyors, road commissioner, sewer commissioner, tree warden, constables, school committee and Boards of Health are elected annually for one year terms, except when there are three or more elected in each category, and then usually the terms are staggered at three year intervals. Some towns elect other officials and some others appoint some of the above or designate specific boards to handle the functions of others.

Such wide latitude has been granted to the towns with respect to election dates, division of the town into voting precincts or districts, and the appointment of officials in lieu of election that it is difficult to compare towns individually. However, several general divisions can be made.

¹ G.L. c. 41, § 1.

The oldest form, still found in 270 towns, is the open town meeting. Any citizen of the town may participate and it is at this open town meeting that the town budget and other town programs are voted upon, and in some instances the various town officers who will supervise the programs are elected. The balance of the towns (42) employ a representative form of town meeting. This method was adopted with a view toward more efficiency, the feeling being that elected town meeting members would better reflect the overall views of the townspeople and prevent control by one faction or persons from one section of the town.

The problem under both general forms has been citizen apathy. In many open town meetings, it has proven a chore on many occasions to secure a quorum to conduct the town business. Moreover the recruitment of candidates to serve as town meeting members under the representative form has also posed difficulties.

Quorum Requirements.

Open Town Meeting. — A quorum is the minimum number of registered voters who must be present at a town meeting for legal action to be taken on the warrant. The quorum requirement is determined by the town itself and included in its by-laws. The General Laws of the Commonwealth neither establish nor require the establishment of a quorum for town meetings. Many towns have no established quorum. Most of these towns are small but included in the list are Acton (5,193), Barnstable (9,488), Concord (7,035), Grafton (4,960), Lynnfield (5,083), Orange (2,950), Sharon (5,783), Spencer (4,206), Wakefield (13,248) Westport (4,496), and Williamstown (3,513).¹ Moreover, some other towns have set quorum requirements so low that in reality they are meaningless such as six in Mount Washington (37); seven in Heath (162), Huntington (767), Sheffield (1,140) and Shelburne (889); nine in Shutesbury (200); and ten in Chester (566) and North Brookfield (1,184).

A quorum based on a percentage of the registered voters is employed in several towns such as two per cent in Dudley (3,264), four per cent in Hinsdale (740) and Westborough (4,437), and ten per cent in Petersham (489), Plainfield (138) and Rowley (1,387).

Proponents of fixed quorum requirements argue that it is essential in order to prevent "packed" meetings so-called, eliminate pressure group control and to bar policy determination by a minimal number of voters. On the other hand, opponents contend that citizens are

¹ These figures represent registered voters, 1968.

stimulated to participate in order to protect their rights because of the legal right of a few to run the town.

Securing a quorum to transact town business has been a long standing problem, particularly in respect to special meetings. On this score the experience of the town of Danvers, as reflected in the following extract, has been typical:

Danvers, like all other towns, suffers for the want of attendance of the taxpayer at the town meeting. While the annual meetings are fairly well attended, not enough interest is taken in the special meetings.

This enables the petitioners for the meeting and their friends, who will always be present, to pass some measures that may be of special interest to them.¹

A recent study points out this difficulty in the following language:

although town government is predicated upon a high level of citizen involvement and participation, it is characterized by poor attendance at town meetings and a lack of citizen awareness of, and orientation toward, local elections and problems.²

Many approaches have been explored (and adopted in some instances) to remedy this shortcoming. Thus the town of New Ashford (98) abandoned day sessions because of meager attendance.

Representative Town Meeting. — One of the reasons for adoption of this system of town government was to overcome the quorum problems and the alleged unrepresentativeness of the open town meeting. The first town to adopt this system, Brookline in 1915, established a majority of the town meeting members as a quorum. This is in accord with the General Laws (c. 43A, § 5), but by special statute, other criteria have also been established. Watertown which adopted a representative town meeting form of government in 1919 originally required the presence of a majority of the members to transact business. However, in 1924 this was amended to 30 per cent of the members and was again amended in 1963 to 40 per cent. Belmont with a town meeting membership of 288 established a quorum requirement of only 100, Framingham 80 out of 200 and Lexington 100 out of a possible 220.

Proponents of a majority for a quorum allege that any other approach is undemocratic and paves the way for a minority to control the town meeting. Opponents insist it is extremely difficult

¹ William B. Sullivan, *Town Governments of Massachusetts*, Danvers Women's Association, February 21, 1911.

² *Modernizing Local Government in Massachusetts*, Part I of Series, Bureau of Public Affairs, Boston College, and Bureau of Government Research, University of Massachusetts, 1968.

to get sufficient members present to properly conduct the town business.

The affluence of our modern society, time consumed in long distance travel to and from work, and television have served to diminish the citizen's interest in the affairs of town government. Generally speaking, political observers have noted that one of the great enigmas of American politics is the failure of the citizen to give more attention to public affairs.¹

Voter Turnout Ratios.

As towns increased in size and problems magnified, changes within each form were made, particularly in the Executive branch of town government. Although most towns still elect a plethora of officials, some have adopted either a strong selectmen system, a strong Board of Public Works, a town manager system or have established the position of Executive Secretary to the Board of Selectmen.

The reduction in the number of elected officials in a town and the corresponding grant of greater power to the Board of Selectmen or a Town Manager or both was expected to attract greater participation in town elections. However, the reverse has occurred as many people have adopted the "let George do it" attitude.

A report on town government published in 1967 surveyed some 158 towns, with respect to elections.² The survey showed that in 14 towns there were no contests for public office, in 12 towns there was only one candidate more than the total of offices to be filled and in ten towns there were two more. Usually the smallest towns have no contests but in 1966, the largest town in the state, Brookline, had only one contest. Only 15% of the registered voters went to the polls. This contrasts with 81% of the registered voters who participated in the state elections that year in Brookline.

As indicated, towns are allowed wide discretion in the determination of their local election dates. Special acts applicable to certain towns have made many exceptions to the General Laws. Saugus, for example, is the only town which holds biennial instead of annual elections. Also, Chapter 79 of the Acts of 1951 provides for the election of five Selectmen and five School Committeemen every two years, in contrast to the majority practice whereby only a part of

¹ State Government and Public Responsibility, Tufts University, 1963, p. 96.

² Joseph F. Zimmerman, *The Mass. Town Meeting, A Tenacious Institution*, Graduate School of Public Affairs, State University of New York at Albany, 1967.

the Board or Committee is elected at each election. Moreover, Saugus holds its election in November along with only one other town, Agawam. The following table indicates not only voter participation ratios for November town elections but also includes ratios for elections held in April, along with those held in January, February and March:

TABLE 4. — *Voter Turnout in April and November Elections.*

YEAR.	Month.	Number of Elections.	Per Cent of Turnout.	Per Cent Turnout All Other Towns. ⁶
1968 . . .	Nov.	1	51.8	45.0
	Apr.	2 ¹	47.1	
1967 . . .	Nov.	2	66.1	48.6
	Apr.	3 ²	50.1	
1966 . . .	Nov.	1	60.7	48.5
	Apr.	3 ²	50.2	
1965 . . .	Nov.	2	64.7	46.6
	Apr.	1 ³	54.7	
1964 . . .	Nov.	1	72.5	51.5
	Apr.	1 ³	47.5	
1963 . . .	Nov.	2	72.3	46.7
	Apr.	3 ⁴	51.5	
CUMULATIVE .	Nov.	9 ⁵	65.8	46.1
	Apr.	13	50.1	

¹ Gosnold and Hudson.

² Gosnold, Hingham and Hudson.

³ Gosnold.

⁴ Gosnold, Hudson and Randolph.

⁵ Agawam in all years, Saugus in 1963, 1965, 1967.

⁶ Elections held in January, February or March.

Although only two towns are involved in the November figure and only four towns in the April statistics in contrast with 306 included in developing the January, February and March ratios, certain trends hold true each year. The participatory ratio in elections held in November exceeded the ratio in all other months every year. Elections held in April drew a greater percentage of voters overall than those held in January, February, and March. This may indicate, aside from an examination of candidates or issues in a particular election, that weather conditions being generally more

favorable in April and November influence voter turnout. Too, the fact that the November participatory ratio is the highest could indicate that election days are associated with November and people by habit are more prone to vote at this time of year. An examination of the per cent of voter turnout in Hingham, Hudson and Randolph when their annual elections were held in March in the same time period reveals a participation per cent of 40.2% in eleven elections, almost 10% less than these same town ratios in April elections.

Biennial Elections. — Saugus is the only town in the Commonwealth which conducts biennial elections. Voter turnout ratios have, in the elections of 1963, 1965 and 1967, exceeded greatly the turnout among other towns. A comparison with Agawam, which holds annual elections (but in the same month as Saugus) in the same years, indicates a high voter turnout in both communities (Saugus 65.8% and Agawam 71.0%). Contrasted with this, Agawam's participation in the 1964, 1966 and 1968 state election years dropped almost 10% to 61.2% even though two weeks prior some 87.0% participated in the state general election. Although this is only a small sampling, it may indicate that people tire of too frequent elections. Too, the knowledge that another election would take place shortly may cause the electorate to adopt an attitude of indifference.

Weather and Postponement. — In the early days of colonialization, town meetings were informal and infrequent and held at various times of the year. It was not until 1692 that the General Court enacted legislation prescribing March as the annual town meeting month. Since then the law has been amended several times so that now the meetings must be held in February, March or April.¹ However, this statute also gives each town the right, by special enactment, to conduct their town meetings at any time. Although the law provides for adjournment from time to time, no provision appears for postponement, especially for elections. In 1969, Plainville attempted postponement of their election due to inclement weather but the state election department ruled that simple postponement was improper, that the entire process of conducting the election must be repeated, from new nominations, to registration, to proper waiting times. Thus, a postponement of an election can be a costly, time consuming process.

¹ G.L. c. 39, § 9. May included in 1972 by Chapter 849 of the Acts of 1969.

Although weather is hard to predict, it is safe to say that the best chance for poor weather in Massachusetts is January through March. As an example of the effect weather has on voting, the town of Fairhaven has a record of over 50% participation annually. However, in 1967 this ratio fell to 30.8% as the temperature was near zero, snow was falling and winds were gale force. This can happen often and with no provisions for election postponement voter turnout is diminished. In 1969 severe weather conditions on election day have prompted at least two towns to consider moving their election date to April. Weymouth is expected to approve, based on a special committee report at their 1970 town meeting, a change from the first Monday in March to the first Monday in April as town meeting day. Co-incidentally, the town election date will be changed from the second Monday in March to the second Monday in April. The Town Clerk attributes the change principally to the weather conditions in 1969 and believes overwhelming approval will be given at the 1970 town meeting. Holbrook has included a similar provision in its warrant for 1970.

Fiscal Year Change. — Passage of an act in 1969 changing local governments' fiscal years from the calendar year to a period from July 1 through June 30 has brought about consideration relative to town elections and town meetings.¹ The Massachusetts League of Cities and Towns has advocated the month of May as town meeting month. Their concern was not so much for elections as it was for town budgetary consideration. However, since town elections are usually a part of the town meeting, this could move town elections to later dates. In connection with this same statute, the Massachusetts Selectmen's Association authorized the formation of a Committee to make a study of (a) later town election dates and (b) uniform town election and meeting dates. This report is due by June 1, 1970 and was prompted by the legislation changing the fiscal year.

Election Dates.

Towns by by-law generally vote in late winter and early spring and cities by ordinance on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Towns, however, vote on different days in the week and the following table shows votes cast by days of the week in 1968 town elections.

¹ Chapter 849 of the Acts of 1969.

TABLE 5. — *Voter Turnout in Towns by Days, 1968.*¹

DAY.	Number of Towns.	Registered Voters.	Ballots Cast.	Per Cent.
Monday	218	853,661	393,599	46.2
Tuesday	16	82,143	29,607	36.0
Wednesday	8	11,926	6,901	57.8
Thursday	4	6,586	4,223	64.1
Friday	3	15,297	7,028	45.9
Saturday	62	239,897	102,475	42.7

¹ Saugus omitted.

The unusual features shown by the table are: (1) Saturday does not produce the greatest turnout but rather ranks fifth and (2) Tuesday which has come to be known as election day almost universally in this country ranks sixth. This tabulation would seem to support the observation that the day of the week on which an election is held has no distinct bearing on the voter turnout.

Participation and Form of Government.

Political scientists distressed by the ebbing interest of the citizenry in the affairs of local government have advocated several proposals over the years to contain this downward trend. One school of thought stresses that only a major reform of town government will breed a responsive electorate. Other sources argue that partisan elections whereby party responsibility is fixed would encourage a great outpouring of voters. Still others propose a realignment of local executive and legislative branches to reawaken voter interest. Several of these approaches have been considered in Massachusetts and the following text treats the effect of voter participation under several forms of town government.

An examination of voting statistics relative to local partisan and non-partisan elections in Massachusetts towns for selected recent years reveals that party elections stimulate larger voter turnouts. While the following table demonstrates the decline of voter interest, it likewise indicates that this downward trend is not as severe in the 31 communities conducting partisan elections.

TABLE 6. — *Partisan and Non-Partisan Town Elections.*

YEAR.	PARTISAN TOWNS (31).		NON-PARTISAN TOWNS (181).	
	<i>Registered Voters.</i>	<i>Votes Cast.</i>	<i>Registered Voters.</i>	<i>Votes Cast.</i>
1964 . . .	149,612	86,680 (57.9%)	993,518 ¹	503,329 (50.6%)
1966 . . .	153,756	83,930 (54.6%)	1,038,904 ¹	495,973 (47.8%)
1967 . . .	155,633	82,929 (53.3%)	1,075,927	400,032 (37.2%)

¹ No local elections in Town of Saugus.

Town Manager Form. — Although 18 towns operate under a town manager form of government, only 17 are considered here statistically. Saugus is excluded because of its treatment earlier.

TABLE 7. — *Participation — Town Manager System.*

YEAR.	17 TOWNS WITH MANAGER.		294 TOWNS WITHOUT MANAGER.	
	<i>Registered Voters.</i>	<i>Ballots Cast.</i>	<i>Registered Voters.</i>	<i>Ballots Cast.</i>
1966 . . .	138,512	57,128 (41.2%)	1,054,148	522,775 (49.6%)
1967 . . .	143,514	49,662 (34.7%)	1,088,046	433,299 (39.8%)
1968 . . .	139,133	50,887 (36.6%)	1,069,377	492,946 (46.1%)

Based on data for the latest three years indications generally are that the town manager form of town government does not generate any great deal of citizen participation. In fact, only two of the towns included above have shown any consistent participation of 50% or better — Rockport and Williamstown.

Representative Town Meeting. — This form of town government calls for the townspeople to elect, usually by precinct, those citizens who will act for them at the annual town meeting. Election participation for three recent years is shown in the table below.

TABLE 8. — *Voter Participation, Representative Town Meetings.*

YEAR.	REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING. ¹		OPEN TOWN MEETING.	
	<i>Registered Voters.</i>	<i>Ballots Cast.</i>	<i>Registered Voters.</i>	<i>Ballots Cast.</i>
1966 . . .	492,074	222,600 (45.3%)	700,586	357,303 (50.9%)
1967 . . .	501,046	196,491 (39.1%)	718,875	279,432 (38.8%)
1968 . . .	492,153	201,647 (41.1%)	716,357	342,186 (47.8%)

¹ Saugus omitted.

In two of the three years the open town meeting surpassed the representative town meeting in voter turnout. In 1967 it was close to equal. The results would indicate that the open town meeting form attracts a little more interest than the representative town meeting. However, in those towns that combine representative town meeting form with partisan elections we find the participation ratio to be much higher than the rest of the group (6.7% greater in 1966, 15.8% in 1967, and 8.0% in 1968).

Board of Public Works. — Other attempts by the towns to increase citizen interest and create a more responsive and responsible town government have centered on vesting more authority in the Selectmen or in the formation of a strong Public Works Board. Both of these reforms were intended to reduce the size of the lengthy town election ballots and enable the electorate to fix responsibility for a multiplicity of town functions in one individual or one board. Under both modifications, many previously elected officials were superseded by appointees of either the Board of Selectmen or Board of Public Works.

The restructuring of the Board of Public Works into a stronger arm of town government, although it has probably proven more efficient, has had no appreciable affect on voter participation. In only one (1967) of the last three elections for which statistics are available have towns in this grouping exceeded all other towns, taken collectively, in percent of registered voters casting ballots and then by only 2.5%. In 1966 this group of towns' ratio was 0.5% less and in 1968, 0.3% less.

Strong Selectmen. — The establishment of a Board of Selectmen with broad appointive and supervisory power over other boards and departments in some twelve towns has not exhibited any discernible effect on citizen participation. In fact, the same trend is shown as in the strengthened Board of Public Works. A comparison of eleven towns in this group with the rest of the towns shows that the other towns participation ratio was greater in both 1966 and 1968 by 2.3% and 6.9% respectively. However, in 1967 all towns were outpolled by the strong Selectmen towns by 3.7%.¹

Executive Secretary. — Another innovation in town government has been the appointment of an Executive Secretary to the Board of Selectmen. This position was established in order to service citizen requests, coordinate departmental programs and supply the

¹ Brookline is omitted because lack of contests would distort figures.

Selectmen and other town officials with sufficient information on town affairs and projects in order to more intelligently act and vote. Participation in the town elections, however, has not been enhanced for this group of towns participatory ratio was 8.0%, 1.5% and 11.7% less than all other towns for the years 1968, 1967 and 1966 respectively.

Comparison — Cities and Towns. — Cities in Massachusetts have always voted much heavier percentagewise than towns in local elections. However, towns reverse this trend in State elections.

TABLE 9. — *City and Town Voter Participation.*

YEAR.	LOCAL ELECTIONS.		YEAR.	STATE ELECTIONS.	
	<i>City.</i>	<i>Towns.</i>		<i>City.</i>	<i>Towns.</i>
1963 . . .	67.9%	47.5%	1964 . . .	85.4%	90.5%
1965 . . .	64.2%	46.9%	1966 . . .	77.6%	78.9%
1967 . . .	67.4%	39.2%	1968 . . .	84.5%	87.9%

Cities and towns differ substantially insofar as the selection of their officials are concerned. City elections not only are biennial but are held on a uniform election date. Elected officials in cities possess much more power than town officials in that they both formulate and carry out all municipal programs. Town officials merely execute the programs authorized by the town meeting. Moreover, there are far fewer elected officials in a city which probably enables the electorate to fix responsibility easier. And a recent study¹ has cited the fact that in town government there is no one single administrative head such as a Mayor or strong City Manager. This same study recommended consideration of several changes in town government. One dealt with a reduction in the number of elected town meeting members which could generate more interest in their actions. In fact, their size under existing statutory provisions is not spelled out. Another recommendation offered for consideration was the election of a town administrator with powers similar to that of a mayor as is done in Lincoln and Cumberland, Rhode Island. Similar to this is the Connecticut practice of electing a "first selectman" who acts as chief administrator of the town without any greater power.

¹ *A Guide for Charter Commissions*, Part III in Series, Bureau of Public Affairs, Boston College and Bureau of Government Research, University of Massachusetts.

Based on the foregoing examination of town elections however for the past several years, the statistics appear to indicate that the form of government itself has no distinct bearing on voter participation. The only positive trends of greater voter participation overall appear in (1) those towns which hold partisan elections, (2) those communities which hold their elections in November or April, and (3) the one town which conducts biennial rather than annual elections.

CITY GOVERNMENT.

Forms of Government.

Thirty-nine of 351 Massachusetts communities are governed under authority of either a special or a standard city charter. Prior to 1915 the adoption or change of a municipal charter was contingent on the enactment of a special statute by the General Court. In 1915, the General Court authorized four standard forms which are still in effect:

1. *Plan A.* — a strong mayor; weak council;
2. *Plan B.* — a weak mayor; strong council;
3. *Plan C.* — a commission form of government; and
4. *Plan D.* — a council-manager system.

Later modifications to these standard charters included;

1. *Plan E.* — a variation of the council-manager form with councillors elected on the basis of proportional representation.
2. *Plan F.* — a partisan mayor-council form.

Boston was the first town to adopt a city charter in 1822. Between 1822 and 1923 some thirty-eight more towns adopted city charters in one form or another. The last town to adopt a city charter was Gardner in 1923. Methuen, in a 1968 referendum, narrowly defeated a proposal to change from town to city status. Political observers view this close contest as encouraging to groups who favor a city government for their communities.

Through special legislation several cities have devised charters which approximate one or more of the standard optional forms. Thus the Quincy charter is akin to the standard Plan A form except that both at-large and ward councillors are elected. Boston's special charter which provides for at-large councillors strongly resembles Plan A. Others have tailored their charter requirements to accommodate singular conditions found in their locality. At

present only 18 cities have adopted one of the standard optional charter forms. The remaining twenty-one function under provisions of special charters generally utilizing a form of mayor-council governmental structure.

Election Dates.

All cities' elections fall on the same day, the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in each odd-numbered year. The only exception to this rule is the city of Marlborough and its ordinance calls for elections on the first Tuesday in November. No general state statute prescribes a specific date.

Plan A.

Four cities have adopted this type of charter. The cities of Fall River, Springfield and Haverhill elect councillors at large while Quincy elects both ward and at-large councillors. Moreover, Haverhill conducted its first Plan A election in 1967. Because most cities' participation is on a relative par in both national and state elections, comparisons of their participatory ratios are based on 1963, 1965 and 1967 municipal elections.

TABLE 10. — *Plan A Cities Participation.*

CITY.	1963.	1965.	1967.
Fall River	84.9%	76.7%	75.7%
Haverhill	58.7% ¹	64.2% ²	74.4% ³
Quincy	62.0%	65.0%	54.3%
Springfield	58.0%	59.0%	63.2%

¹ Plan D Election.

² Referendum change from D to A.

³ First Plan A Election.

Quincy is the only city in this group that elects ward councillors and this factor did not spur any greater voter turnout. Taken cumulatively the turnout ratio (Haverhill excluded in 1963 and 1965) was 67.0%, 65.3% and 66.0% for 1963, 1965 and 1967 respectively. Political observers attribute the large turnout in Fall River in 1963 to an ethnic battle between the Portuguese and French factions in the city. Haverhill's substantial increase was caused it is claimed by the change in charter and the novelty of electing a chief executive.

Plan B.

Nine cities are governed by the so called weak mayor-strong council form of government. Their participation ratio is as follows:

TABLE 11. — *Participation Ratio in Plan B Cities.*

CITY.	1963.	1965.	1967.
Brockton	71.7%	71.7%	63.1%
Fitchburg	77.3%	76.3%	77.1%
Marlborough	78.9%	76.1%	72.2%
New Bedford	66.7%	58.4%	63.1%
Newburyport	83.8%	75.3%	79.4%
Salem	83.3%	70.2%	69.3%
Waltham	57.1%	66.0%	63.7%
North Adams	79.4%	55.9%	82.3%
Revere	77.8%	79.4%	76.6%

All of the above cities elect ward councillors. Their cumulative participatory ratio for 1963, 1965 and 1967 was 71.7%, 68.7% and 68.8% respectively. This ratio overall is slightly higher than Plan A cities but the participatory ratio range among the cities in each group was similar.

Plan E.

Five cities employ the city manager form of government. In 1964 Revere abandoned this form of government. Cambridge is the only city in the group that uses proportional voting.

TABLE 12. — *Participation Plan E Cities.*

CITY.	1963.	1965.	1967.
Cambridge	69.8%	68.7%	70.1%
Gloucester	69.9%	66.4%	72.6%
Lowell	74.5%	72.0%	65.4%
Medford	60.1%	56.6%	57.9%
Worcester	70.8%	62.2%	55.7%

All of the above elect their officials at large. Their ratio of voter turnout has declined from 69.7% in 1963 to 64.8% in 1965 and 61.7% in 1967. Of the groups studied, Plan E cities have the lowest participation ratio. This coincides somewhat with town ratios in that towns with managers also exhibited the same trend.

Special Charters.

Some 21 cities including Boston function under a special charter authorized by statute. All of them except Boston, Lawrence and Taunton elect both ward and at-large councillors. Everett is the only city which elects a bicameral legislative body.

Among the three cities of Boston, Lawrence and Taunton which elect at-large councillors only, the overall participatory levels were 63.2% (1963), 53.2% (1965) and 66.2% (1967). The lower 1965 ratio was caused by the lack of a mayoralty contest in Boston.

The remaining 18 cities operate under a ward councillor-mayor system. Although they may be classified as Plan A or B they are grouped separately because of the special characteristics of their charters.

TABLE 13. — *Special Charters — Ward Councillors.*

CITY.	1963.	1965.	1967.
Attleboro	62.1%	79.2%	67.6%
Beverly	55.0%	72.9%	71.9%
Chelsea	78.0%	68.1%	75.9%
Chicopee	84.8%	83.3%	81.6%
Everett	64.8%	81.0%	80.1%
Gardner	76.6%	72.2%	69.0%
Holyoke	76.6%	75.9%	70.2%
Leominster	75.9%	75.9%	67.4%
Lynn	58.5%	70.6%	59.1%
Malden	70.4%	61.8%	61.6%
Melrose	65.0%	37.3%	69.1%
Newton	60.3%	66.6%	48.8%
Northampton	76.7%	72.4%	77.0%
Peabody	78.5%	72.4%	77.0%
Pittsfield	77.8%	77.4%	74.8%
Somerville	68.9%	63.9%	69.4%
Westfield	72.0%	70.1%	71.5%
Woburn	78.0%	73.5%	79.8%

These particular cities had a turnout ratio of 69.6%, 70.2% and 68.6% in 1963, 1965 and 1967.

Finally, the two remaining localities, Brockton and Northampton, conduct partisan elections. Their combined turnout for the three examined years was 73.0% in 1963, 68.7% in 1965, and 66.8% in 1967.

A significant factor in all groupings except Boston's is that there was a lower percent voting in 1967 than in 1963. This same trend was evident in the towns. Some 23 cities showed a decrease and only eight communities displayed any consistency in voter turnout ratios, having a differential of 5% or less in the three elections. Seventeen had a ratio differential of 5 to 10%, six ranged from 10 to 15%, five from 15 to 20% and three had a differential in excess of 20%. It could be observed that candidates, contests and issues are strong factors in attracting people to the polls. Moreover, participation has remained relatively constant overall if Boston is overlooked in 1965, the ratio varying by less than 1%.

An examination of racial groups, educational level of inhabitants, medium income and the percent of registered voters enrolled in a party in comparison with voter turnout ratios does not indicate any definitive trend toward higher or lower voter participation attributable to these factors.

Two studies, one done at the national level ¹ and the other on the local level ² bear out generally what the foregoing statistics indicate.

The national study utilized data from 282 cities with population of 25,000 or more. Issues and candidates were not examined and, further, the elections were non-concurrent with national and state elections. The study concluded that partisan elections and the mayor-councillor forms of government stimulate larger turnouts of voters.

A comparison of Massachusetts cities voting ratio with the national ratio is as follows:

TABLE 14. — *National vs. Local Voting Trends in Cities.*

	<i>Partisan.</i>	<i>Non- Partisan.</i>	<i>Mayor- Council.</i>	<i>Manager.</i>	<i>All Cities.</i>
Massachusetts ³	74%	66%	67%	65%	65%
United States	58%	44%	57%	41%	47%
East	67%	63%	68%	56%	64%

¹ Robert R. Alford and Eugene C. Lee, *Voting Turnout in American Cities*, Institute of Governmental Studies and Department of Political Science, University of California, 1968.

² Charles H. McGlue, *Political Apathy Among Voters*, 1964 (mimeo pamphlet).

³ Based on 1963, 1965, 1967 elections.

As indicated, voting participation in Massachusetts is in most instances higher than the rest of the United States. However, the authors of the national study caution that voter turnout and citizen participation in government are not necessarily correlates. Moreover, they point out that large voter participation in many instances indicates negativism rather than a sincere interest in local government. In addition, low voter turnout could indicate approbation of the existing governmental structure and of the incumbent officials. Cited are two factors the study deems relevant. First, groups composed of better educated persons often use channels other than voter turnout to formulate and influence policy thus resolving issues before they become relevant to a campaign or an election. Secondly, under a manager form of government, similar action takes place under the influence of the city manager.

The Massachusetts study cited earlier, draws the conclusions that partisan, mayor-ward council forms create the least apathy among voters. However, the failure to include all cities in each group in the statistics tends to distort the differences in participation.

However, the most recent analysis of state and local government differs in some respects with other national studies.¹ Insofar as partisan local elections are concerned, this study concludes that the role political parties play are a vital factor in stimulating voter participation. Moreover, the reform movement toward non-partisan elections, municipal elections held separately from important state or national elections and the introduction of the council-manager charter have been depressant factors on voter turnout and citizen participation. Lastly, these factors have tended to increase the chances for Republican success in Democratic cities.

In summary, conclusions of the three studies along with the statistics in this report indicate the same trends as in towns that partisan elections draw greater participation along with mayor-council structures of government.

Chapter IV. States Voting Trends.

Introduction.

The foregoing discussion relative to voter participation in local government elections in Massachusetts has omitted any consideration of voter attitudes and trends elsewhere on the local level. The diversity and organization of local government throughout the

¹ Thomas R. Dye, *Politics in State and Communities*, Prentice Hall, 1969, p. 224 et seq.

country precludes any appropriate or meaningful comparison with the political subdivisions within this state. On the other hand, the similarity of the corporate structure of state government, particularly as to the election of major statewide offices, provides a basis for comparison with Massachusetts developments. As a preface to that analysis, the following text briefly summarizes state laws dealing with basic voter qualifications.

States' Voting Provisions.

Age. — Since World War II, the issue of a lower voting age has stirred spirited debate among public officials, educators, political scientists, and the citizen body.¹ On several occasions it has been endorsed by both political parties assembled in national convention. Likewise, Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson have voiced their personal support for a lower age provision.

However, state legislatures generally have not been receptive to similar appeals. Since the approval of an 18 year old provision in Georgia in 1943, only three states have followed suit: Kentucky at age 18, Alaska at 19, and Hawaii at 20. Moreover, the electorate has shown less inclination to revise the age provision in referenda questions, particularly in most recent years. Thus, lower age constitutional provisions have recently been rejected — in some instances by substantial margins — in the states of Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey and Ohio. Similarly the voters of Hawaii defeated an 18 year old proposal in 1968.

Citizenship. — A universal requirement of citizenship is in force in all states at the present time. As late as 1900, 11 states permitted aliens to vote. Complete unanimity occurred in 1926 when Arkansas denied the vote to noncitizens. The end of mass open immigration is considered to be the basic reason for ending the voting privileges for noncitizens.

Residence. — The single most restrictive factor in state laws that render ineligible the greatest number of potential voters especially in local elections are residence provisions. Usually, these requirements are for a period of time in the state, a shorter period in the county or city and a still briefer period in the ward, precinct or voting district.

State residency requirements vary from a maximum of one year in 33 states to a minimum of three months in the states of New York

¹ For further detail, see Massachusetts' Legislative Research Council report titled *Lower Voting Ages*, (Senate No. 997 of 1968).

and Pennsylvania. In 15 states a six months provision is in effect (Conn., Ida., Ind., Ia., Kans., Me., Mich., Minn., Neb., Nev., N. H., N. J., Okla., Ore. and Wis.). Although the trend has been toward liberalizing residency requirements, the Southern states apparently hold to at least a one year residence because this disenfranchises the migrant negro farm laborers in particular. Mississippi just recently reduced its state residency requirement from two years to one year.

With relation to Presidential elections some states have reduced residency requirements but have been loathe to change similar requirements for their own state and local elections. Thus, of the 33 states with a one year provision generally, 17 have lowered their qualification for Presidential elections, ranging from three months in Delaware downward to no minimum in Alaska, North Dakota and Ohio. Of the 15 states with a six months residency requirement, five have no minimum requirements in Presidential elections (Mich., Neb., Okla., Ore. and Wis.).

Residency requirements of up to one year are considered necessary in order to eliminate carpetbaggers and those persons with insufficient knowledge about local and state affairs because of their newness in the area. It is roughly estimated that from 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 citizens are disenfranchised because they move interstate.

Literacy Test. — In 1965, 19 states required a literacy test that ran the gamut from ability to write one's name to a comprehensive test administered by educators in New York. Some states, especially in the South, included interpretation tests, with the registrar the sole judge. So long as the test was not used in a discriminatory fashion to ban voter registration the federal government did not interfere. However, in 1965 the U. S. Attorney General brought suit against Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and several counties in North Carolina for using the tests discriminatorily. The gist of the charges against these several states and counties was that because less than 50% of the voting age population was either registered or voted in 1964 the literacy tests had been used discriminatorily. As a result federal boards of registrars were dispatched to those areas to register voters.

Miscellaneous. — Other areas in which states have placed restrictions involve people who have been convicted of a criminal act such as a felony or election fraud or who have been institutionalized or deemed mentally incompetent. Some states go much farther such as Louisiana which may bar a person from voting for par-

ticipating in a voting march or disturbing the peace. The ban in many states against recognizing persons living on military reservations and restrictions on absentee voting have further diluted the number of persons eligible to vote.

Voter Turnout Ratio Elsewhere.

All the states elect their Governors in November of the even numbered years except Kentucky, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia which conduct their elections in odd numbered years. One other state, Louisiana, conducts gubernatorial elections in February of even numbered years. In eleven of the states, the terms are for two years and in the remaining 39 they are four years.¹ Some 24 of these 39 states conduct these elections at the midpoint of the Presidential term while ten hold the elections concurrently with the election of Presidential electors. The remaining five are those cited above which either elect in odd numbered years or February of even numbered years.

Most recent changes in terms of governor have occurred in Massachusetts, Michigan and Nebraska which elected their first four year term Governor in 1966. Another recent change was adopted by Florida which, starting in 1966, elected its Governor to the midpoint of a Presidential term rather than concurrently.

The percentages shown in the following table were derived by using the actual vote in gubernatorial elections and the civilian resident population of voting age. The percentages for 1962 are based on the actual vote in 1962 shown as a per cent of voting age population in 1960. (No 1962 figures are available.) The 1964 and 1966 figures are expressed as a percentage of the actual votes cast to the voting age population of 1964. (No 1966 figures are available.) The 1968 figures are a percentage of the actual votes cast in comparison with 1968 voting age population. The percentages for elections held in the odd years are based on actual votes cast compared with the nearest year in which voting age population figures are available.

Other data contained in the table are residence requirements which show (a) the length of residence required in a state to qualify for voting, and (b) the briefest time required in either a county, city, town or voting district. Finally, a state's party competitiveness, as determined in a recent study, is included.² This determina-

¹ A four year term is in effect in Wisconsin starting in 1971.

² Frank J. Sorauf, *Party Politics in America*, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1968.

tion of party preference among the states was made in study which used data from 1946 to 1963 and from which a composite index based on the popular vote for Democratic gubernatorial candidates, the percentages of seats held by Democrats in both branches of the state legislature and the percentages of all the gubernatorial and legislative terms the Democrats held. The resultant averages then could range from 1.000 (total Democratic success) to .000 (total Republican success). Presidential election data was not used.

TABLE 15. — *Percentage of Voting Age Population Voting in Gubernatorial Elections.*

STATE.		YEAR.				RESIDENCE. . .	
		1962.	1964.	1966.	1968.	State.	Local.
Alabama	4*	17.3	—	44.5	—	1 yr.	3 mos.
Alaska	1	55.3	—	62.3	—	1 yr.	30 days
Arizona	2	49.4	56.0	44.7	51.9	1 yr.	30 days
Arkansas	4	29.6	53.2	50.7	52.7	1 yr.	30 days
California	1	61.1	—	60.9	—	1 yr.	54 days
Colorado	1	60.0	—	60.5	—	1 yr.	20 days
Connecticut	1	65.0	—	59.4	—	6 mos.	6 mos.
Delaware	1	—	71.7	—	69.0	1 yr.	30 days
Florida	4	—	48.8	43.8	—	1 yr.	6 mos.
Georgia	4	13.3	—	37.7	—	1 yr.	6 mos.
Hawaii	1	62.6	—	63.0	—	1 yr.	3 mos.
Idaho	1	68.4	—	66.9	—	6 mos.	30 days
Illinois	1	—	73.4	—	68.5	1 yr.	30 days
Indiana	1	—	73.3	—	69.4	6 mos.	30 days
Iowa	3	49.5	71.4	54.6	68.8	6 mos.	10 days
Kansas	3	49.4	65.7	53.5	63.9	6 mos.	30 days
Kentucky	2	—	47.6	—	45.8	1 yr.	60 days
Louisiana	4	—	41.2	—	18.5	1 yr.	3 mos.
Maine	3	51.4	—	57.3	—	6 mos.	3 mos.
Maryland	2	41.7	—	46.9	—	1 yr.	6 mos.
MASSACHUSETTS	1	65.7	72.5	63.0	—	1 yr.	6 mos.
Michigan	1	60.6	67.8	52.9	—	6 mos.	30 days
Minnesota	1	62.3	—	64.2	—	6 mos.	30 days
Mississippi	4	—	31.3	—	37.0	1 yr.	6 mos.
Missouri	1	—	66.2	—	63.2	1 yr.	60 days
Montana	1	—	72.4	—	69.8	1 yr.	30 days
Nebraska	1	54.6	67.6	56.8	—	6 mos.	10 days
Nevada	1	55.1	—	56.8	—	6 mos.	10 days
New Hampshire	3	62.3	72.2	59.7	67.7	6 mos.	6 mos.
New Jersey	1	55.8	—	54.5	—	6 mos.	40 days
New Mexico	2	51.2	63.6	52.0	61.5	1 yr.	30 days
New York	1	53.3	—	53.6	—	3 mos.	3 mos.
No. Carolina	2	—	52.1	—	54.2	1 yr.	30 days
No. Dakota	3	65.1	74.7	—	69.4	1 yr.	30 days
Ohio	1	53.4	—	48.4	—	1 yr.	40 days

TABLE 15. — *Percentage of Voting Age Population Voting in Gubernatorial Elections — Concluded.*

STATE.		YEAR.				RESIDENCE.	
		1962.	1964.	1966.	1968.	State.	Local.
Oklahoma	2	50.6	—	46.4	—	6 mos.	20 days
Oregon	1	59.4	—	60.5	—	6 mos.	—
Pennsylvania	1	61.8	—	57.2	—	90 days	2 mos.
Rhode Island	1	62.6	73.7	62.4	70.5	1 yr.	6 mos.
So. Carolina	4	20.7	—	33.6	—	1 yr.	3 mos.
So. Dakota	3	65.8	74.8	58.6	72.5	1 yr.	30 days
Tennessee	2	29.8	—	29.7	—	1 yr.	3 mos.
Texas	4	28.8	44.0	24.7	47.0	1 yr.	6 mos.
Utah	1	—	78.7	—	76.3	1 yr.	60 days
Vermont	3	52.6	70.7	58.6	65.5	1 yr.	90 days
Virginia	2	17.6	—	23.3	—	1 yr.	30 days
Washington	1	—	73.3	—	70.5	1 yr.	30 days
W. Virginia	2	—	74.2	—	68.9	1 yr.	30 days
Wisconsin	3	53.8	71.0	49.0	68.5	6 mos.	10 days
Wyoming	1	63.0	—	64.4	—	1 yr.	10 days

Source: Government Affairs Institute, *America Votes*, Washington, D.C.; Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, series P-25, No. 342; and Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1968, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

* Numbers indicate party competitiveness.

1 — Two party.

2 — Modified one party Democratic.

3 — Modified one party Republican.

4 — One party Democratic.

Several observations can be drawn from the table. First of all, in those states that hold their gubernatorial elections concurrently with the selection of Presidential electors, the participation ratio is much greater. Secondly, voters in Southern states vote less frequently than the rest of the country.

Party Competitiveness. — As partisan elections in Massachusetts' cities and towns have demonstrated, party competitiveness appears to be a significant factor in relation to voter participation. From 1962 to 1968 a total of 126 gubernatorial elections were held. In those states which are identified as one party states, the voter turnout ratio in all 20 elections was below the median ratio for all states. Conversely, in those states regarded as two party states the participation ratio in 46 out of 55 elections exceeded the median turnout. Only two of 22 elections held in states classified as pro-Democratic exceeded the median and these two elections were held

in West Virginia, a state where all accepted norms in determining voter participation have little, if any, relevancy. At first glance it would appear that pro-Republican states participate to a greater degree but more careful scrutiny reveals they are approaching two party status. In 19 of 29 elections in these jurisdictions the voter turnout ratio exceeded the median ratio. However seven of the eight states involved elected Democratic Governors during this period. Moreover, Arkansas and Florida, although Democratic States, elected Republican Governors and the voter turnout ratio approached the median ratio. Therefore, one must conclude that as a state moves toward a party competitiveness status its voter turnout and participation ratios increase. Most recently, Virginia, a pro-Democratic state, elected a Republican Governor in 1969. Based on unofficial tabulations, the participation ratio approached 40 per cent, almost double the state's previous high of 23.3%.

Primary Election Ratios. — Although the above table contains the percentage ratios of the general elections one factor must be noted. In some one party states, the vote in the primary elections has exceeded the general election total. Thus, in 1962 and 1966 Alabama's turnout was 17.4% and 0.2% higher, Arkansas in 1962 was 9.3% higher, and Georgia in the same year 22.9% higher. Louisiana had a 7.1% higher ratio in 1964, and Mississippi was 9.9% and 16.7% higher in 1964 and 1968 respectively. Three other states' ratios were higher in the 1962 primary, South Carolina by 6%, Tennessee by 7.6%, and Texas by 14.2%. Tennessee again in 1966 showed a higher ratio by 6.4%. Again the competitiveness in the election appears to be a strong factor in influencing people to get out and vote.

Residency Requirement Effects. — Although residency requirements vary from three months to one year, they do not appear to have as significant an affect on voter turnout as one might suspect. In 82 elections held in states with a basic one year residency requirement, 38 exceeded the median ratio and 44 were lower. The states with a six months requirement conducted 40 elections and in 27 of them the participation ratio exceeded the median. Four elections were held where three months residency was the norm and two were higher, two lower than the median. In those states which have established a 30 day or less requirement in the district, the median participation ratio was exceeded in only 41 out of 70 elections. Moreover, in 26 elections out of 56 the median ratio was surpassed in those states whose district residence requirements are greater

than 30 days. In fact, no great increase has been observed by reduction of residence requirements at the state level.

Several other factors cited as having an affect on voter turnout are polling hours, literacy tests, machine voting and precinct size.

Polling Hours. — All states except New Hampshire prescribe when polls shall close and these closing hours vary from 5:30 to 9:00 P.M. An analysis of 122 gubernatorial elections held from 1962 to 1968 indicates that late polling hours promote increased participation. In 12 of 18 elections with a 70% or over participation ratio, the polls were open till 8:00 P.M. or later. Conversely, less than a 50% turnout occurred in 26 out of 32 elections when the polling places closed before 8:00 P.M. Also, among those states that close their polls at 8:00 P.M. or later, a 60% or better turnout occurred in 35 of 56 elections. In contrast to this only 23 of 66 elections exceeded a 60% turnout ratio when polls were closed prior to 8:00 P.M. These statistics give credence to the findings and recommendations of both the Committee on Economic Development and the President's Commission on Voting and Registration that because of heavy voting in evening hours the later the polls are open the greater the chance of increased participation.

Literacy Tests. — Some 19 states require some form of literacy test as a prerequisite for voting. In some instances, federal intervention in the late sixties suspended this test but for purposes of this study the requirement alone is studied. In 45 elections in states which require a literacy test as a voter qualification a turnout ratio in excess of 60% occurred in only 17 elections. The voter turnout was less than 50 per cent in one-third of them. On the other hand, in 43 out of 81 elections wherein no literacy test was required 60% participation levels were reached. Further, only one-fifth of these elections fell below a 50 per cent participatory ratio. In those states, however, where no discriminatory practices exist, the literacy test itself did not appear to be an impediment. Thus, the voter turnout ratio exceeded 50 per cent in eight literacy test jurisdictions (Cal., Conn., Me., Mass., N. H., Ore., Wash., and Wyo.).

Machine Voting. — Although advocates of electronic and machine voting insist that voter ratios are increased by mechanized voting procedures, states' experiences on the other hand disclose mixed findings. For example, Connecticut, Delaware and Rhode Island, three of the highest voter participation states, require their use along with Louisiana, Tennessee and Texas, three of the lowest in

voter turnout ratios. Conversely, Idaho, Nebraska and Utah which report no voting machines in use always rank at or near the top of the list while Georgia, Mississippi and Virginia, traditionally at the lower spectrum of voter participation ratios, report scant use of machines.

Precinct Size. — The President's Commission on Voter Registration made the following observation on this score:

An overcrowded polling place, with its congestion and long lines, creates an unhappy atmosphere. Polling places can accommodate efficiently only a certain number of voters. To eliminate congestion, States should write into law realistic maximum sizes for voting precincts. Oversized precincts should be split or sufficient facilities provided to avoid jamming the polls.

Although precincts vary in size, the average number of voting age population assigned to a voting unit in the United States is 706. The three states with the highest average are Connecticut (2,866), Florida (1,424) and New Hampshire (1,385). The three lowest averages are North Dakota (168), South Dakota (242) and Washington (300). With only one exception, Florida, the participating ratios in these states is high. Evidently, the problem, if there is one, is not the number of people assigned to a precinct, but the location of and facilities provided at each voting unit.

Massachusetts Statewide Participation.

In comparison with other states, Massachusetts shows a rather high voter participation ratio. Contrary to the conclusions drawn by several studies cited earlier that literacy tests and rigid residency requirements are two major factors in lower voter participation, the Commonwealth has constantly been among the leaders, and no other state at the present has more rigid residency requirements.

As elsewhere, the greatest voter interest appears in Presidential election years. Voter turnout ratios were 76.9%, 72.5%, and 69.9% in 1960, 1964 and 1968 respectively. A considerable decline was experienced in statewide elections in intervening years as 65.7% voted in 1962 and 63.0% in 1966. This follows not only a national pattern of declining voter interest but also parallels the ebbing interest existent in both city and town elections in the Commonwealth.

Not only are students of government concerned with people not going to the polls but equally disturbing is the fact that large numbers of voters fail "to go down the ballot," once in the polling booth. In this connection, in 1966, over 35,000 voters did not make a

choice among the gubernatorial candidates, 144,000 in the auditor's contest and over 265,000 in several Congressional races. Even more pronounced were the numbers who failed to indicate a yes or no vote on constitutional and other questions, ranging from 326,847 blanks on the sales tax to 620,131 on the Home Rule Amendment.

This same trend manifested itself in the contests for county officers and the various liquor license questions. In Boston, for example, despite considerable agitation over liquor licenses and constant complaints that there are too many bars, almost one-half of those voting made no yes or no choice (102,178 blanks out of 220,462 ballots cast).

The reason attributed for this disinterest is that the length of the ballot confuses and discourages the voter. Further, the visibility of certain offices and important questions are clouded by the major contests and the voter, because of lack of familiarity, declines to vote.

The Committee for Economic Development has recommended separate elections for national, state, and local officers. Coincidental with this, consideration could be given to placing questions of purely local interest such as liquor licensing on municipal election ballots as a means to spur greater interest in these elections and thus make the regular state election ballot less cluttered and confusing.

Other recommendations have either already been adopted or are under consideration in Massachusetts. Uniform election dates for all state and national offices, four year terms for statewide office holders and the Governor and Lieutenant Governor running as a team are now in effect. Longer terms and uniform election dates for local officials are being studied by various civic groups, and the voters will decide in 1970 on a reduced residency requirement. As mentioned earlier in this report, the General Court has pending measures to facilitate registration and absentee voting. Finally, the cooperation of party leaders and civic groups in educating the public as to their responsibilities is judged by all as the most important factor in getting out the vote.

Chapter V. Increased Voter Participation Proposals.

According to the best estimates, there are approximately 3,300,000 persons in Massachusetts age 21 or older who ostensibly are potential voters. In 1968 some 2,725,058 persons were registered to vote or approximately 82.5% of the potential electorate. Of this

group, 2,348,005 voted, representing 86.1% of those registered and 71.1% of potential voters. Almost 1,000,000 potential voters did not participate in that election for varying reasons. Indifference, carelessness and other personal reasons accounted for many thousands of persons failing to become eligible voters. On the other hand, a large segment of the total group was disenfranchised because of certain constitutional and statutory requirements deemed necessary to preserve the integrity of voting.

Registration Procedures.

Before a person otherwise eligible can become certified as a voter, he or she must formally register in the community of their permanent abode. For a valid registration, certain conditions as described below are imposed.

Literacy Requirements. — Massachusetts requires that a person be able to write his name and read an excerpt from the Constitution as one prerequisite for registration. Aside from about 18,000 of all ages who are institutionalized because of mental incompetency of one form or another, it is estimated that there are 55,000 afflicted with some degree of mental retardation.¹ Moreover, the U. S. Census Bureau reports that in 1960, the latest year for which figures are available, 6% or 180,000 people over 25 in the state had completed less than five years of school.² It was also estimated that 83,000 people among the population 14 years of age and older were illiterate. If this figure is realistic coupled with the number institutionalized it represents about 10% of the potential voters not registered to vote.

Others who probably are victimized by the literacy test include a substantial group of the foreign born who totaled 576,000 in 1960. Of these over half came from countries which do not use the English language. Potentially, then, there are some 250,000 persons whose native tongue was other than English. A provision for reading and writing in one's native tongue could overcome the handicap of illiteracy because of a language barrier alone.

In 1969, House, No. 2257 proposed elimination of the literacy requirement contained in the Constitution. This proposal received only its initial reading in the joint legislative constitutional session, with further action being deferred.

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Digest of Educational Statistics*, 1966.

² *Ibid.*

Opponents of literacy requirements argue that there is no real evidence that illiterates have poorer judgments than literates nor has any criteria been set to determine "good judgment." Further they assert that the opportunity to participate in government is the right of all men. Conversely, proponents insist that ability to read and write is a necessary prerequisite for understanding and good judgment in elections.

Elimination of Registration. — In Massachusetts and in most states, the potential voter generally must assume the initiative to effect a valid registration. He or she must go to the local city or town hall and formally register to vote.

However, in most other countries, election officials visit the potential voter, some of them annually, and enroll the individual. This approach has developed support among some legislators and students of election procedures in this country. Although a substantial canvassing crew would be necessary, advocates point out that a simple questionnaire consisting of name, address, age, citizenship and length of residence could be filled out by the enumerator. On the basis of this data, election officials would automatically enroll any person who would be 21 prior to the election and also those who would qualify by length of residence through the year.

Critics of this scheme argue that if a person is not interested enough to register on his own, he will not be an active and responsible voter. Proponents discount this objection citing the vast voter turnout in foreign countries where similar enrollment procedures are in practice. Moreover, because registration lists are always out of date because of deaths and moving, the opportunity for fraud is present. For example, in Philadelphia it is quite common for registered voters to outnumber the population in some wards, and the number of votes cast in a ward to exceed the population.¹

In Massachusetts at the present time a listing of all inhabitants 20 years of age and older is required by statute (C. 51, §§ 4-14B). Sufficient information is gleaned from this listing to determine a person's eligibility to vote. In fact, registered voters are signified by an asterisk. It is suggested that this listing be the basis for a voting list and that the enumerators be appointed deputy registrars of voters so that a legal enrollment could be made at each dwelling place.

¹ Thomas R. Dye, *Politics in States and Communities*, Prentice Hall, 1969.

Computerization, according to some elections' administrators, could greatly facilitate registration procedures, cost less and produce more voters, if it were centralized in the state.

Some of the above changes were considered by the Legislature in the 1969 session. Two proposals called for at home registration by deputy registrars. (Senate, No. 80 and House, No. 4860). Both proposals resemble the Canadian and Idaho registration systems. Proponents cite the fact that in 1964 Idaho participated 20% higher than the national average and four out of five Canadians voted compared to three out of five Americans. Three other bills would provide for automatic registration at a voter's new address in cases involving inter-community movement within the state. (Senate, No. 566, House, No. 2984 and House, No. 3236). Among other measures, mandatory evening registration on the first Monday of each month until 10 P.M. would be authorized (Senate, No. 552), and city councils would be empowered to abandon ward registrations if they saw fit. All of the above were defeated except the latter which became Chapter 102 of the Acts of 1969.

Party Enrollment.

Present law requires that a person who is either enrolled in a political party or who enrolls in a party by requesting that parties' ballot at a primary election cannot have his party designation changed or cancelled until 30 days from the time of request has elapsed (C. 38, s. 37). In addition, the voting lists used at primary elections are available for two years to candidates and/or political committees upon their request. Because some people for various reasons are reluctant to acknowledge they are members of a political party, several proposals designed to eliminate present statutory requirements are usually filed each year. The petitioners argue that greater voter participation would be generated in primary elections by providing for immediate cancellation of party enrollment after voting and the exclusion of such party enrollment from any public voting lists. Conversely, opponents contend that practices such as those proposed would lead to fraudulent and corrupt practices as well as planned party line crossing in an attempt to nominate weaker candidates of the opposition party.

Two other proposals affecting voter registration also were defeated. Both had similar purposes, setting the closing time for registration on the last day from 10 P.M. to noon (Senate, Nos. 568 and 569).

The rejection of most proposed changes indicates a conservative feeling on preserving the franchise for those who are willing to exert at least a little effort to participate in elections. It is claimed this feeling, though having an admitted adverse affect on voter turnout, preserves the franchise for those most qualified as electors.

Reduction of Residency Requirements.

A statistical compilation in 1968 by the U. S. Bureau of the Census which evaluated the effect of residency requirements on voter participation in the various states concluded that present Massachusetts residency requirements disenfranchised some 211,000 people in congressional, state and local elections and some 30,000 in Presidential elections. In both 1964 and 1968 a person could vote for Presidential electors with only 31 days residence in the state (C. 51, s. 1A). Of the estimated 211,000 disenfranchised, some 181,000 qualified under the statute. However, in 1968 only 9,141 individuals took advantage of this law, but 5.5%. In 1964 4,472 persons out of approximately the same number who were eligible to vote for Presidential electors cast ballots. Thus, it would appear that the special reduction in residency requirements for Presidential elections has had a very slight affect on increasing voter participation. A fear that the secrecy of the ballot is jeopardized since the voter may exercise his choice in relation to a single office only may account for the rather limited use of this procedure.

Because residency requirements are constitutional provisions, the lengthy process of constitutional amendment must be followed to change them. Senate, No. 73 of 1969, however, has already been "agreed to" by two different General Courts. This proposal reduces the one year state residency requirement to six months, while it leaves the six months' residency requirement for a town or district intact. Proposals to reduce town or district residency requirements to three, two or one month were either rejected or not acted upon by the joint convention. The article agreed to will be placed before the voters in the 1970 state election. If approved, some 100,000 new potential voters at least would be eligible to register.

Lower Voting Ages.

A constitutional amendment to reduce the voting age to 19 will be presented to the electorate in 1970 for their consideration. Another

proposal to reduce the age to 18 is pending before the General Court. It is estimated that by 1972 some 471,000 residents will comprise the 18 to 20 year age group. This would mean that close to 3,800,000 persons would be potential voters. However, past studies on teenage voting habits disclose that this age group does not participate as fully as older age groups. Conceivably, although the franchise would be extended and the actual number voting increase, the percentage of "population of voting age" voting would probably decrease.

Absentee Voting Procedures.

Voting by absentee ballot is permitted in state and municipal general elections only. Armed forces personnel, their dependents residing with them, persons absent from their community for any reason and the physically handicapped are eligible, providing they meet the other prerequisites for voting. The absence of reliable data poses difficulties in determining the number of persons who vote in this fashion in a given election. However, some political scientists consider the administrative maze and burdensome procedural requirements associated with the absentee voting privilege as discouraging greater use of this process. They envision more frequent use if a more simplified method of casting an absentee ballot is devised. Moreover, an increase in voter interest in primary or preliminary elections may be forthcoming if absentee balloting were permitted.

In regular elections some sources have suggested that, instead of the present lengthy process of applications and mailings, teams of two, one from each major political party, be named deputy registrars and upon request of a physically disabled person to vote, visit the person, ascertain his right to vote, allow him to vote and then hand-carry his ballot back to the city or town hall. Advocates of this method claim vast postal savings and increased participation would result. Others, although desirous of facilitating voting, fear that any change in the present method of conducting absentee voting could lead to fraudulent practices and loss of faith in the electoral system.

Since the word "election" is used in the several constitutional provisions governing the franchise and related activity, it is contended that a constitutional amendment is necessary to permit absentee voting in primary or preliminary elections. Hence, sitting

in joint convention, the General Court has given initial approval to House, No. 3027 of 1969 which clearly spells out that absentee voting is allowable not only in general elections but in special, primary and preliminary elections as well. If "agreed to" by the next General Court (1970-1971), this proposition will be on the ballot subject to the approval by the electorate in 1972.

In 1969, the Legislature enacted four laws designed to facilitate absentee voting. One authorizes the issuing of a second ballot if the first one is spoiled (C. 60). Another permits a person who will be out of town on election day to vote in the town or city clerk's office (C. 545). This eliminates the need for an "outside the district" mailing. Thirdly, Chapter 204 makes it easier for federal personnel and service personnel to vote and register by mail. Lastly, the authority of city and town governments to revoke absentee voting was repealed (C. 39).

Election Day a Legal Holiday.

Approximately three-quarters of the states include by statute general statewide election days in their list of official legal holidays. However, in most instances Sunday Laws so-called do not apply so that business as usual generally prevails. In many jurisdictions it amounts to what might be classified as a bank holiday but again with provisions for setting aside the limitations imposed on banking activity. Thus, a comparison between those areas where election day is designated as a legal holiday and Massachusetts is not really indicative of greater or lesser participation because of the day's status. For example, three states had greater participation in 1964 than Massachusetts (Ind., N. D., and S. D.) and six had a lower per cent of turnout in the same year (Ariz., Colo., Del., Ha., Ohio and Tenn.) In 1960 the same held true. Many foreign countries, however, which not only make election day a legal holiday but which also vote on weekends, do show a much greater turnout.

Proposals to change election dates are regularly filed for consideration by the General Court. Representative of the measures filed are House, No. 2702 of 1969 which called for establishing the first Sunday in November as General Election Day. Another, House, No. 2987 would grant authority to cities and towns to hold their elections on Sundays. Others would shorten the time lag between primaries and elections, such as House, No. 2203 which

established a four-week period, or Senate, No. 555 which reduced this time to five weeks.

One unique proposal for changing the method of balloting was proposed by Mr. Frank Stanton, President of Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. at a commencement address he delivered at California Institute of Technology in June of 1965.¹ His plan called for computerized voting, polls open for 24 hours in all states simultaneously throughout the country and the establishment of election day as a national legal holiday. With a holiday, it is argued that people could vote at their convenience and have only one function to perform on that day. A commentary in the *Saturday Review* endorsed the proposition.² This article also cited the fact that the National Governors Conference endorsed the proposal and forwarded it in the form of a resolution to the Congress. The nation's governors felt that not only would people vote in greater numbers because of greater awareness of the election but results from Eastern states would not unduly influence voters in the West.

Although it disagreed with Stanton's proposal relative to 24-hour polling hours, another publication wholeheartedly endorsed making election day a national holiday with the following observation:

Voting on a holiday would be less an unpleasant chore bandaged onto an otherwise conventional workday and more a reflective exercise of self-government.³

This magazine alleged that the 24-hour simultaneous polling proposal was merely a device to make CBS's reporting of elections safer and earlier.

A national study commission recommended that the President and Congress proclaim the even year general election day as a national day of dedication to American Democracy. At the same time, it called upon the individual states to consider declaring the day a half-day full legal holiday. Members of the commission believed that such action would underscore the privilege of a free ballot. Since voting tends to be heavy during lunch hours and after 5 P.M. and because increased population projections indicated that 100 million Americans will be voting in the near future, the establishment of a half holiday should result in a more even flow through the polls.

¹ Richard L. Tobin, *The Saturday Review*, August 12, 1967, p. 49.

² Vital Speeches, July 15, 1965. Vol. XXXI, No. 19, p. 606.

³ John McLaughlin, *America*, Vol. 117, No. 18, Oct. 28, 1967, p. 488.

Recently, the National Congress has considered several proposals in the same vein. Senator Jacob Javits of New York proposed that national election days be made full holidays but this proposal died in the Senate Committee on the Judiciary.¹ A proposal which provided for a uniform closing hour throughout the country in presidential elections suffered a similar fate.²

Presently pending before Congress in the House Judiciary Commission are two measures filed by Representative Helstoski of New Jersey and Mills of Arkansas, respectively, which prescribe making national election days full legal holidays.³ One other measure calls for a national presidential primary on a uniform election date.⁴ Also, Senators Baker of Tennessee, Bayh of Indiana, Dominick of Colorado and Goldwater of Arizona have filed two measures which would establish simultaneous 24-hour voting in national elections. The latter's concern probably dates back to the 1964 election when early returns from the East might have had an adverse effect on evening turnout in the West. All of these measures have been carried over for consideration by the second session of the 91st Congress.

Finally, a Massachusetts study commission reported against establishing election day as a legal holiday on the grounds that two holidays occurred in the month of November (Senate, No. 525 of 1960).

Uniform Election Dates.

Some jurisdictions establish a uniform date not only for all elections for state offices, as is done in Massachusetts, but also for all municipal offices in the state. Local elections are held concurrently with either the national elections, as in Hawaii and Iowa, or with general state elections, as in Arizona, Arkansas, Indiana, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. Because of the usual greater participation in national and state elections, local elections in these states have large voter turnouts. However, Arkansas indicated in its reply to the Bureau questionnaire that actual participation based on actual votes cast for the various offices rather than on ballots cast, varied. This may be an indication

¹ Senate, No. 2111, 90th Congress, 1st Session.

² House Resolve, No. 2, 90th Congress, 1st Session.

³ House, Nos. 1168 and 9859, 91st Congress, 1st Session.

⁴ House Joint Resolve, No. 50, 91st Congress, 1st Session.

that the length of the ballot confuses the voter and causes him to neglect making choices for all offices.

Several states have established uniform dates for local election by statute. In Illinois elections occur in April, and Nevada in June. A dozen other states have set uniform election dates but because of special charters, statutes and home rule constitutional provisions, true uniformity in election dates has not been accomplished (Conn., Ida., Ind., Ky., Miss., Mo., Mont., Neb., N. C., N. D., Ohio and S. D.). Interestingly enough, participation in Massachusetts city elections is generally as high or higher than local elections in those states with uniform dates while towns' participation overall is lower.

More attention may be focused on local elections by civic groups and the news media when their dates conform. Notwithstanding this, home rule advocates stress that election dates should be determined by the localities themselves claiming interest will be generated by the issues and candidates and not merely because other communities are also voting.

Weekend Voting.

Because some foreign countries have enjoyed relatively high voter participation ratios through weekend election dates, some political observers have advocated this change in the United States. However, automatic registration and compulsory voting may cause these ratios to be inflated.

One competent elections' analyst, Richard Scammon, concluded that the homogeneity of the American populace posed inherent problems to the adoption of such a plan. He cited the great number of Orthodox Jewry and Seventh Day Adventists who could not, because of religious beliefs, vote on Saturday and some sects of Christians who felt that their Sabbath, Sunday, should not be defiled by elections.

Time Off for Voting.

At least 32 states permit employees to take time off from work to vote. Most of the statutes require the employee to apply for the time off prior to the election day. Generally they permit the employees' absence for one to four hours and over one-half of the statutes expressly prohibit an employer from deducting any wages for authorized absence to vote. However, the laws of at least 11

states permit pay only if the employee does not have sufficient free time to vote on his own. (Alas., Ariz., Calif., Colo., Ha., Ia., Mo., Nev., S. D., Tenn. and Tex.).

Insofar as the participatory ratio is concerned time off with or without pay seems to have little correlation to increased turnout. Both Utah with the highest ratio and Mississippi with the lowest provide free time for voting. Although Massachusetts law requires employers to grant two hours leave of absence for voting, few take advantage of it because of the loss of pay that could be involved (G. L. c. 149, s. 178).

P30	
M1	Massachusetts, Comm. of
	Voter Participation at State &
	Municipal Elections.
DATE	ISSUED TO

